



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Precautions are needed during cold weather emergencies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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During times of power outages following winter storms, many people use items that can produce carbon monoxide. Exposure to carbon monoxide can cause flu-like symptoms and ultimately lead to coma and death. Exposure to odorless, colorless carbon monoxide is responsible for more fatal unintentional poisonings in the United States than any other agent.

If a generator is used, be sure to follow these safety tips:

- Have a carbon monoxide monitor with fresh batteries in it and place it in the house high on a wall. Carbon monoxide is lighter than air and rises towards the ceiling.
- Place generators as far away from the home as possible. People have had carbon monoxide poisoning from generators as far away as 30 feet away from the house.
- Never hook up the generator to the home's normal wiring. Improper wiring of a home generator can create backfeed in the electrical wires to the house and could injure or kill utility workers repairing the electrical lines.

Many risks are associated with the use of fuel-burning appliances in enclosed or semi-enclosed areas. These include camping stoves, portable propane gas stoves and charcoal grills used in enclosed or semi-enclosed spaces. The fumes are deadly.

Here are some other tips:

- Do not use a generator or appliances if they are wet.
- Do not store gasoline indoors where fumes could ignite.
- Use individual heavy-duty outdoor-rated cords to plug in other appliances.
- Do not turn on a stove for heat; it is not safe.
- Never place a space heater on top of furniture or near water.
- Never leave children unattended near a space heater.
- Keep heat sources at least three feet away from furniture and draperies.

For more information on injury prevention, please visit the Alabama Department of Public Health's Web site at www.adph.org.

1/28/14